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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes results of a research study, undertaken by the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, to determine recent developments in achieving women's educational equity and possible future directions of this movement. Selected trends, achievements, and areas in which equity has not been achieved are identified. The report presents specific information on: (1) participation patterns in elementary, secondary, and higher education; (2) changes in women's expectations for their own education; (3) persistent achievement differences; (4) differences that indicate educational inequity; (5) opportunities for women in entrepreneurial and senior corporate positions; and (6) employment options. Problems in implementing educational equity are described, and tables and a 30-item bibliography are included. (JHP)

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OPTIONS AND DECISIONS IN WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL EQUITY 1988

A Report from
the National Advisory Council
on Women's Educational Programs

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The changing needs of women and girls in today's society and the function that education plays in meeting those needs requires constant vigilance and thorough study . . .

NACWEP annual report 1987

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Introduction

Since 1974, Congress has authorized nearly 74 million dollars to be spent on the development of model projects that demonstrate educational equity for women and girls of all ages. The American private sector has become aware of the importance of educational equity, too, responding, locally, to the requirements of women and girls if they are to achieve equity.

Recent national reports have received widespread approval for their extensive research on reforms taking place today in education. Surprisingly, however, none of these reports have made any reference to the changes in educational equity for women.

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs (NACWEP), whose Congressional mandate includes the responsibility for reviewing federally funded programs for their adherance to equity believed it appropriate to conduct a study to determine where we are today after more than a decade of public and private sector effort in redressing educational inequities.

The study, "Options and Decisions in Women's Educational Equity," was initiated by an ad hoc committee of the NACWEP after determining the worthiness of the project through discussions with staff members of the education committees in the U.S. Senate, House of Representatives and the Department of Education. An independent contractor conducted the research with assistance from an equally independent advisory committee.

Before researching the case for educational equity, it was necessary for the Council to have a working definition of equity. No consistent definition exists. The Council, therefore, drawing upon its collective experience and knowledge, for this report, defined equity as "the ability and opportunity to have options, make choices, handle decisions and take responsibility". Thus, the choices and decisions in which the woman and girl of today can engage are equitable only if

she has the ability to choose, has options available to her and the will to take on responsibility. How educational programs have taught these skills and society has provided the opportunities for women to make choices and take on responsibility is the purpose of this report. Conversely, where women are denied options and opportunities, are hindered from developing the ability to make choices and decisions, and, where they have rejected responsibility, is also the subject of this report.

With this data, the Council can more knowledgeably make future recommendations to the Congress and the Secretary of Education on the disposition of federal funds in women's educational equity programs.

While the concept, guidelines and conclusions of the study are solely the responsibility of the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, we are indebted to Elizabeth Reisner and the staff of Policy Studies Associates, Inc., for invaluable assistance in conducting the research and the volunteer advisory committee who offered excellent counsel from the beginning of the research until its completion.

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs is particulary grateful for the contributions of Councillors, Judith Moss and Virginia Tinsley who directed the project for the Council.

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Options and Decisions in Women's Educational Equity

Recent national reports on educational reform omit any reference to equity in the provision of educational services to women and girls. Although these reports have usefully focused national attention on educational-improvement needs and strategies, the commissions and councils that prepared the reports have not explored problems in achieving educational equity for women. Through omission, reports such as *A Nation At Risk* (issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education), *Time For Results* (by the National Governors' Association), and others permit the assumption that women's educational equity was an issue of the 1970s, for which national attention is no longer necessary. The omission of this issue leads to an inference that, by raising the performance of all students, proposed educational reforms will address the special needs of particular groups such as women and girls.

Achieving educational equity for women and girls is as important today as it was in the 1970s, even though specific problems have changed.

Current evidence suggests that achieving educational equity for women and girls is as important today as it was in the 1970s, even though specific problems have changed. New options available to women in education, employment, and elsewhere have led some women to set increasingly ambitious goals for themselves. At the same time, the availability of new options has prompted many women to question how desirable some of these new roles really are. For women who are poor or otherwise disadvantaged, many desirable options are not easily accessible. For these women, the urgency of providing basic necessities for themselves and their family members often seriously impairs their capacity to take advantage of the options available to women generally.

This report of the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs describes recent developments in the effort to achieve women's educational equity and possible directions for this endeavor in the late 1980s and 1990s. Because no consistent definition of equity has emerged from prior discussions, the Council developed a definition to guide this report.

Equity is the ability and opportunity to have options, make choices, handle decisions and take responsibility.

Given a full range of options, women--for good and legitimate reasons--will often make choices that differ from men's; these choices may rule out parity.

This definition deliberately excludes certain standards that analysts have previously used in attempting to measure equity. Under the Council's definition, for example, equity does not imply statistical parity for women and men, girls and boys. Instead, it acknowledges that, given a full range of options, women--for good and legitimate reasons-- will often make choices that differ from men's; these choices may rule out parity.

Although the Council's advisory responsibilities focus on the educational components of equity, it understands that educational equity must also be viewed from the perspective of the larger society. Where educational equity has been achieved, it should be reflected in the options available to women outside the formal education system and in the choices they make.

The report examines developments in women's educational equity through a review of selected trends and conditions in education and in certain other areas of American life, selected because they illustrate trends and conditions prevailing in many other parts of American society. The report identifies both achievements in women's equity and areas in which equity has not been attained, focusing especially on problems that can be addressed through education. The discussions are framed within the components of the Council's definition of equity.

"Equity Is the Ability and Opportunity To Have Options and Make Choices . . ."

. . . In Education

The past 15 years have witnessed significant increases in the educational options available to women and girls. The enactment of Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments prompted some of these changes through its prohibition of sex segregation and discrimination in educational activities receiving federal financial aid. Federal-assistance programs aimed at educational equity, including the Women's Educational Equity Act Program and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, assisted educational institutions in making these changes. The sex-equity provisions of the 1976 amendments to the Vocational Education Act led to other important institutional changes at state and local levels. Beyond the specific provisions of federal law, public expectations have prompted other, subtler changes in the educational options available to women and girls.

The existence of new options can be documented in the educational choices that students are making. According to data summarized in the following sections, girls and women are making choices to pursue educational programs that look increasingly similar to the programs that boys and men choose. These patterns are evident at all levels of education--elementary secondary education, higher education, programs offering postsecondary vocational education, and adult-education programs. To a remarkable extent, these patterns reflect women's increased expectations for their own education. Yet, despite increasingly similar patterns of educational participation, differences persist in the academic achievement of women and men.

Girls and women are making choices to pursue educational programs that look increasingly similar to the programs that boys and men choose.

Patterns of participation in elementary and secondary education.

Because course opportunities have generally been the same for girls and boys in elementary schools, participation differences are seen mainly at the secondary level. These differences have gradually narrowed, as seen in Table 1. In each type of secondary-school program--academic, vocational and general--the participation rates of girls and boys became more similar between 1972 and 1980. This trend is illustrated in Table 1 by the fact that girls' percentage of enrollment in each program moved nearer to 50 percent over the eight-year period.

Table 1

Changes in the Secondary-School Enrollment of Girls, Relative to Boys

Program Type	Girls' Percent of All Enrollment in: 1972	1980
Academic	48	50
Vocational	60	54
General	47	50

SOURCE: ED surveys, as reported in *Digest of Education Statistics, 1987*, and *High School and Beyond: A Capsule Description of High School Students*, 1981.

Despite the narrowing of enrollment differences, girls and boys continue to choose different high-school courses.* Girls enroll in the complete more English, biology, and foreign-language courses, for example, while boys enroll in and complete more science and mathematics courses. In secondary vocational-education programs, girls enroll in and complete more office-related courses, while boys are more likely to take trade and industrial courses.

*Education-related data are drawn from U.S. Department of Education (ED) surveys and studies unless otherwise noted.

Among the most educationally needy students, an important indicator of educational participation is the dropout rate. Estimates of the total number of dropouts vary, but all indicate that the number is quite high (Orr, 1987). One source that differentiates between girls and boys and is generally considered to be accurate, though slightly dated, is ED'a longitudinal survey, *High School and Beyond*, which indicates that boys are somewhat more likely to drop out of school than girls. That survey shows that 18 percent of the boys in the tenth-grade class of 1980 dropped out before their expected graduation, while only 15 percent of the girls left school. In newer research for ED, Sherman (forthcoming) estimates that 325,000 to 375,000 males and 290,000 to 325,000 females drop out of school each year. Though more likely to drop out, boys are more likely than girls to finish high school at a later time.

Women's enrollment in higher education has risen rapidly, relative to men's, indicating that women are taking advantage of the options available to them.

Patterns of participation in higher education.

Women's enrollment in higher education has risen rapidly, relative to men's, indicating that women are taking advantage of the options available to them. In 1970, only 41 percent of all college and university students were women, while in 1985 women made up 52 percent of all such students. The trend is reflected in increases in degrees awarded to women at each level of higher education, as shown on Table 2. This growth occurred during a period in which the number of women studying part-time and the number of older women students rose rapidly, explaining part of the increase in women's enrollment (Moran, 1986).

Women are earning a growing proportion of the degrees awarded in fields that men have traditionally dominated, such as business and management, computer and information science, engineering, law, and medicine. As seen in the table, however, women continue to earn only about a third of all doctoral and first professional degrees.

Table 2

Changes in the Postsecondary Participation of Women, Relative to Men

Degree Level	Women's Percent of All Degrees in: 1970	1985
Bachelor's	43	51
Master's	40	50
Doctorate	14	34
First Professional (e.g., law, medicine, theology)	6	33

SOURCE: ED surveys, as reported in *The Condition of Education, 1987*.

Patterns of participation in postsecondary vocational-education programs and adult-education programs.

Women constitute a significant majority of all students participating in vocational-education and training programs at the post secondary level. Since the early 1980s, women have constitued well over half of the students entering both public and proprietary vocational schools.

In addition, women take over half of all adult-education courses, selecting slightly different courses from those that men select. Although business courses are the favorite of both women and men, women's second choices tend to be health care and health sciences courses, while men's second choices tend to be engineering courses.

Changes in women's expectations for their own education.

A major factor explaining women's increased enrollment in post-secondary education is changes in their own educational expectations. In the *National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972*, 50 percent of the women surveyed said that their parents did not think they should attend college, while only five percent of the men reported these parental opinions. Not surprisingly, more men reported that they planned to attend college or junior college than did women. By 1980, however, women participating in *High School and Beyond*, the next national longitudinal survey in education, were more likely than men to plan for college or junior-college enrollment, suggesting a major change in the attitudes and educational expectations of girls. This change undoubtedly reflects the influence of changes in high-school counseling and the emergence of new role models for young women during the eight-year period.

Another factor in the growth of women's postsecondary enrollment has been the general postwar growth in higher education fueled by the G.I. Bill. Although most of the immediate beneficiaries of the G.I. Bill were men, its broader impact was to open college enrollment to families whose children had never considered college to be a realistic personal option. The postwar enrollment surge prompted the expansion of college campuses and, hence, educational options. This expansion benefited first the returning soldiers themselves, then their younger brothers, and eventually their sisters and daughters.

A major factor explaining women's increased enrollment in postsecondary education is changes in their own educational expectations.

Persisting differences in achievement.

Although women are choosing to pursue more education, women's academic achievement differs from men's in several areas. Current measures indicate that boys and men achieve at a higher level than girls and women generally, with the most notable differences occurring in science and mathematics. In elementary and secondary grades tested by ED's National Assessment of Educational Progress, boys score higher than girls in science, especially in the upper grades. Girls score higher than boys on tests of

reading and composition, although boys' reading scores are rising and closing the gap with girls' average scores.

On college entrance examinations, the differences are more one-sided, with men generally outscoring women on aptitude tests of both verbal and mathematical skills. On the two main tests--the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing Program Assessment (ACT)--men score consistently higher in mathematics. Although women score higher on the ACT verbal test, men's verbal scores on the SAT overtook women's scores in 1972 and have stayed higher since then.

Whether continuing differences indicate educational inequity.

Taken together, trends in girls' participation in elementary and secondary programs indicate that they are deciding to pursue the educational opportunities available to them and that their resulting participation rates look more and more like boys' rates, even though girls often select different courses an achieve at lower levels. The differences in the choices that girls and boys make in secondary school and in the outcomes they achieve raise serious questions. For example:

- Do girls experience special difficulty in science and mathematics courses designed around the learning styles that boys exhibit? Psychological research suggests that girls and boys may use different cognitive approaches in learning mathematical and technical concepts (Tetreault, 1986).

- Are mathematics and science programs in the elementary grades providing the instruction necessary for girls to make informed choices about high-school courses in mathematics and science?

- Are good options available to girls who have dropped out of high school but want to return and earn their diplomas? Because girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school due to parental responsibilities, they tend to need special services (such as child care and personal counseling) in order to complete high school.

While women's postsecondary participation has grown significantly relative to men's, women continue to enroll in doctoral and professional programs in lower numbers than men. These differences may reflect the fact that the growing proportions of women enrolled in baccalaureate and masters programs have not had time to complete graduate school. Women's enrollment may also have been held down in doctoral and professional programs by recruitment and admissions policies that have not acknowledged that more and more women are qualified and ready to obtain advanced training.

Another factor deterring growth in the graduate enrollment of women is the smaller amounts of financial aid that women receive, compared to men (Moran, 1986). In school year 1981-82, women in their second year of college or postsecondary vocational training received only 73 percent of the educational grant funds that men received. Women fared slightly better in the receipt of loans, receiving 84 percent of the loan amounts that men received.* Although these data do not include graduate students, lower amounts of financial aid to women as undergraduates may create financial pressures that discourage them from pursuing lengthy graduate programs.

Differences in the academic achievement of women and men raise other complex questions about whether girls and women are enjoying equitable options in education. Are boys and girls treated differently in writing classes and science classes, thereby prompting their different levels of achievement? Or are boys and girls so innately dissimilar in certain cognitive areas that differing average levels of achievement are inevitable? The truth may lie somewhere between these two extreme possibilities. In any case, better and more sensitive instruction is needed to improve the achievement of girls and boys in areas in which each group is weak. Though this would seem to be a reasonable response to achievement disparities, the lack of attention to gender differences in teacher-training programs suggests that most teachers are not prepared to deal with these problems (Sadker & Sadker, 1980).

Are boys and girls treated differently in writing classes and science classes, thereby prompting their different levels of achievement? Or are boys and girls so innately dissimilar in certain cognitive areas that differing average levels of achievement are inevitable?

. . . In Employment

As in education, the number of women in the labor force has risen dramatically, from 31 million in 1970 to 52 million in 1986, according to the U.S. Bureau of Census. Women now make up 44 percent of the work force (including self-employed and home-based workers), up from 38 percent in 1970. This trend has occurred without regard to age, race, marital status, or the presence of children in the home. Unlike trends in education, however, the growth in numbers of women in the work force reflects a wide variety of aspirations and conditions, encompassing women who pursue challenging, prestigious careers and women who must work at low-paid service jobs due to their educational level, geographic isolation, or other factors. These widely varying options and choices are reflected in several areas of special concern for this report, including (1) the employment of women in education, (2) opportunities for women in entrepreneurial and senior corporate positions, and (3) employment options to help women accommodate family commitments. Although these topics represent only a sampling of women's employment issues, they highlight several of the most important.

Women now make up 44 percent of the work force (including self-employed and home-based workers)

*More recent data on student financial aid do not distinguish aid received by men and women. No comparative data are available on financial aid to graduate students.

Employment of women in education. While women's patterns of educational enrollment increasingly resemble men's, women's employment in education has experience no such transformation. At elementary and secondary levels, women hold most of the training jobs, and men hold most of the administrative jobs. About two-thirds of all public school teachers are women, a level that has remained fairly constant for the last 25 years. At the same time, only one-quarter of all elementary and secondary administrators are women (American Association of School Administrators, 1985) Most women administrators hold jobs that are characterized by less responsibility and lower pay (e.g., elementary-school principal) than the administrative jobs held by men (e.g., superintendent).

Precedent and tradition tend to restrict educational institutions in their employment practices, which often rely on committees of senior faculty and administrators to make hiring and promotion decisions.

At postsecondary levels, the number of women faculty members and administrators is increasing, although women are less likely to obtain tenure. The American Association of University Professors reports that about three-quarters of all male faculty are tenured, while less than half of all female faculty members have tenure (1987). This finding is consistent with their report that women are less likely to receive tenure-track appointments than men.

Reasons for the disparity in women's educational enrollment and employment are two-fold. First, precedent and tradition tend to restrict educational institutions in their employment practices, which often rely on committees of senior faculty and administrators to make hiring and promotion decisions. These practices discourage recruitment from sources other than familiar, "old-boy" networks and may also restrict promotion opportunities to candidates who have followed the career paths that are traditional for that institution. A second and very different reason for the male-female disparity is that teaching often attracts women who value the shorter day and year at the workplace that goes with classroom jobs (even though teachers often put in long hours at home preparing for their classes). Because of family commitments, these women may not seek jobs in educational administration, since these jobs generally require more hours per day and more days per year in the office. These circumstances create an employment environment for education that contrasts with the environment for women in certain business fields.

Because of family commitments, some women may not seek jobs in educational administration, since these jobs generally require more hours per day and more days per year in the office.

Opportunities for women in entrepreneurial and senior corporate positions.

The number of women operating their own businesses and working in senior corporate positions has grown rapidly in the last several years. This change reflects both a growth in the options available to women and the fact that many women are choosing these new options.

The number of women-owned sole proprietorships has increased rapidly, for example. During a five-year period between 1977 and 1982 when the number of all new businesses grew, women started a growing share of these businesses, with women-owned sole proprietorships increasing from 23 to 26 percent of all such businesses.

according to the U.S. Small Business Administration (1985). The net receipts of women-owned businesses only increased from eight to ten percent of total net receipts of sole proprietorships during this period, however, indicating that women-owned small businesses were smaller than small businesses owned by men. Indeed, most women-owned businesses were in either the service or retail sectors, where overhead and start-up costs are traditionally lowest. Women were also more likely than men to establish businesses operated from their homes.

At the corporate level, *Fortune* reports that more and more women are moving into senior jobs and that their jobs are higher in the corporate hierarchy than the jobs women have previously held (August 8, 1987). For example, in 1977, one-third of all women corporate officers held the title of executive vice president or higher; by 1986, the proportion had risen to nearly three-quarters. Though relatively few women reach these levels of corporate management, their impact may be disproportionately large--both in encouraging the promotion of women at lower levels and in serving as role models and mentors to younger women.

The demands of high level, corporate jobs, however, often exacerbate the tensions women experience in balancing employment and family responsibilities.

New employment options in business ownership and senior corporate management have become available partly as a result of other, related developments. Because many women are receiving more education, there are more qualified women candidates for key, decisionmaking jobs. Similarly, as more women move up through responsible junior-level jobs, the number of women qualified for senior positions or entrepreneurial ventures also increases. The demands of these jobs, however, often exacerbate the tensions women experience in balancing employment and family responsibilities.

Employment options to accommodate family commitments.

As women gain a stronger voice in corporate and public governance, some women have used their positions to advocate changes intended to help women balance the competing priorities in their lives. A good example is the provision of employer-sponsored day care, a topic in the news recently. The federal government's General Services Administration has stepped up its sponsorship of day-care centers serving the children of federal employees across the country. Although a small contribution to the national day-care need, this agency's move represents a high-level acknowledgment of the value of day-care facilities to employers and employees. The federal government has also led in the provision of flexible scheduling for its employees (known as "flex-time"), a boon to families that must juggle the schedules of parents, children, and other family members. Some private employers are adopting these options and promoting others such as shared jobs, in which two half-time employees (often women) fill one full-time position. As women assume more influential positions and as employers find themselves competing to attract the best qualified women workers, these options (and perhaps others, such as day care for elderly family members) can be expected to become more widely available.

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. . . In the Military

One area of American life in which women's options have expanded rapidly is military service. In the U.S. armed services, increased recruiting has accompanied the creation of new military career options for women and, as a result, has influenced the choices of many young women. The numbers alone tell a remarkable story: between 1973 and 1986, the percentage of women in the U.S. armed services grew from less than two percent to 10 percent, for a current total of more than 216,000 women (U.S. Department of Defense, 1987).

Because Defense Department research on recruitment showed that women value the military's educational benefits more highly than men do, the services adjusted their recruiting procedures to highlight the value of education incentives to women.

In our consideration of women's options and choices, the example of military service is important because options for women expanded quickly in response to a specific national-policy change--the 1973 replacement of the military draft with the All Volunteer Force. With the drop in the number of young men (due to population-wide birthdate declines), Pentagon leaders determined in the early 1970s that implementation of the All Volunteer Force required a greatly expanded infusion of women recruits. To implement this policy, the military services used the following strategies:

- In order to meet their needs for new personnel at all levels, the services increased their recruiting of women into both enlisted ranks and officer-candidate programs and opened the service academies--the U.S. armed forces' most prestigious training institutions--to women.

- Because Defense Department research on recruitment showed that women value the military's educational benefits more highly than men do, the services adjusted their recruiting procedures to highlight the value of education incentives to women (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, 1985).

- The services opened many new military occupational areas to women, allowing almost two-thirds of all military jobs to be filled by women (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1986).

- Although laws and policies continued to exclude women from combat positions, the services redefined these limits in order to permit the assignment of the most qualified individuals to key roles.

This response has been a major factor in achieving military recruitment goals and hence in the success of the All Volunteer Force.

The results of these strategies have been generally positive, judged in terms of the Defense Department's larger goal of implementing the All Volunteer Force. First and most important from the Defense Department's perspective, women responded positively to the new options the services offered, as seen in the dramatic increase in the number of women in uniform. This response has been a major factor in achieving military recruitment goals and hence in the success of the All Volunteer Force. Second, women entered at both officer and enlisted ranks in the same proportions as men, so that women are not

disproportionately concentrated at one level or another. Third, women entering the armed forces proved to be more intelligent and better educated than men on average, scoring higher on intelligence tests and entering with more years of schooling than men. These entry-level characteristics may help account for the fact that military women are currently being promoted more rapidly than military men.

Several problems have accompanied these achievements, however. First, women continued their pre-1973 patterns of service in either administrative support or medical health-related roles despite the opening of many new occupational areas (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1986). Second, some women in the armed forces have been sexually harassed. The September 1987 report of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services describes serious problems of sexual harassment and discrimination in Navy and Marine units in the Pacific region. Data are not available to compare current levels of harassment and discrimination with earlier levels, but the attitudes of at least a few military leaders have obviously not changed as rapidly as Department-wide policies. Because the armed forces now have procedures for dealing with harassment and discrimination, the allegations in the Defense Advisory Committee report resulted in further investigation and disciplinary procedures against the main perpetrators of the offensive acts.

The example of Defense Department actions to increase the participation of women illustrates that women will respond positively to the availability of new career options, even in what are traditionally male domains. It also shows, however, that special considerations may be necessary, such as safeguards against sexual harassment and discrimination and the provision of incentives that women find attractive (such as educational benefits).

. . .For Some But Not All Women

The story told so far highlights successes in the expansion of educational and career options for women. These options are not equally available to all women, however. Personal circumstances--such as poverty, minority-group status, old age, teenage motherhood, and disability--make some of these options harder for many women to obtain. Most critically, options for pursuing educational opportunities and for blending family and job responsibilities are harder for these "at risk" women to pursue. The result is that, while economic circumstances may force them into the labor market, their lack of education is likely to limit available jobs to unskilled or semi-skilled positions with few benefits, such as child care or flexible scheduling (which might make it possible to attend school).

"Equity is the Ability and Opportunity To Handle Decisions and Take Responsibility . . ."

Options and choices are only half the story. Women's equity also involves the ability to make decisions and take responsibility for oneself and others.

. . . For Enlarging Women's Opportunities

Among the decisions that women sometimes face is whether to push the existing limits on what they can do as women. These decisions face women in all sectors of American society and can take varying forms, such as the following:

Among the decisions that women sometimes face is whether to push the existing limits on what they can do as women.

- **The decision to become a pioneer in a male-dominated field.**

  This decision surely faced the first women to work as telephone linemen or orchestra conductors and the first women to run for mayor or governor. They confronted the fear that their personal identities would be lost in their public visibility as "firsts," that their uniqueness as women in men's roles would obscure their personal competence to perform their chosen responsibilities. Undoubtedly, their fears were sometimes realized. These individuals made it possible, however, for other women to step into similar roles later and to succeed or fail on their own merits, without regard to their gender.

- **The decision to try to extend new opportunities to additional women.**

- Once a woman becomes a "first" or one of the "firsts" in a given field, she must decide whether to try to open similar opportunities to other women. If her own success has come at a high cost--and especially if other women have resisted her move into prominence--she may feel reluctant to try to bring other women along with her. This decision is particularly hard if women have been barred from the activities and training traditionally considered necessary as qualifications for the new role. Often it is much easier not to make additional waves, to let the next generation take care of itself. Because of her prominent position, however, the "first" may be uniquely able to make certain that her accomplishments bear fruit for other women.

- **The decision to complain about individuals or institutions that discriminate against women.**

  A third difficult decision is whether to act forcefully against persons or institutions that discriminate against or harass women. The easier path is often to avoid confrontation with the offending individual or institution--to change jobs, drop the volunteer activity, or move away. Indeed, prosecution of

a complaint can be painful, often involving significant emotional and financial commitments as well as other personal disruptions. As long as the evidence of the offense is clear, however, the decision to bring a complaint may curtail future discriminatory or harassing behavior.

These decisions are never easy. In each instance, the potential benefits must be weighed against the negative consequences for the individual herself and for others. For many women, an important party in these and other decisions is the family.

. . . For Finding a Balance Between Career and Family Commitments

These women have learned that "supermom" was only a myth and that very few women can really have it all--a happy and fulfilled family, a supercharged career, and a prominent role in civic or cultural affairs.

New opportunities for career advancement require many women to confront a completely different type of decision--how to balance competing commitments to family and career. These women have learned that "supermom" was only a myth and that very few women can really have it all--a happy and fulfilled family, a super-charged career, and a prominent role in civic or cultural affairs. This realization leads many women to make important trade-offs among the options available to them.

Some women decide to pursue a less demanding career or no paid career at all, in order to invest more time in their families. One group of northern Virginia women who chose to stay home while raising their children formed a nonprofit organization, Mothers at Home, that publishes a monthly 32-page newsletter, *Welcome Home*. The newsletter includes articles and other features that provide advice, reflections, and humor for the benefit of at-home mothers.

Children's educational achievement is more closely related to mothers' educational level than to other external factors (such as family income or father's education).

Women who choose to invest more time in their families sometimes make educational decisions to prepare for these personal choices. These are the women, for example, who may prepare for a teaching career because of the work-day and work-year flexibility it affords. For women making the decision to give highest priority to their families, a high-quality education has many practical benefits. Most obviously, it gives them desirable options--and leverage with employers--in finding jobs that fit their family-oriented priorities. In addition, it helps them raise intelligent, inquiring children (proving researchers' conclusions that children's educational achievement is more closely related to mothers' educational level than to any other external factor, including family income or fathers education).

Other women examine the options available to them and choose to postpone or forgo childbearing, in order to devote their energies to their careers. These women often make educational decisions to prepare themselves for these roles, including decisions to prepare for demanding professions or occupations where part-time or interrupted employment options are rare. There are many examples of such decisions--the woman physician-in-training who chooses a surgical specialization or the young woman who enters an educational program in law enforcement. In each instance, the career

can only be pursued as a full-time, all-absorbing activity. To compensate for the sacrifices these and similar careers require, they often provide personal satisfaction and the knowledge of significant contributions to ther lives of others.

A third group of women differs from the preceding two because their circumstances limit their freedom to choose one priority or another. For these women, economic necessity requires them to spend virtually all their available time in paid employment, even though they might prefer to devote more time to their families. Some of them must postpone careers or training because teenage pregnancy has forced them into parenthood before they are ready. The need to care for aging family members may also constrain their ability to pursue career options.

For these women, educational opportunities tailored to their schedules and responsibilities are particularly important. Because they are less likely to be able to afford tuition and transportation costs, they are more likely to rely on publicly supported educational programs located near their homes. Options to accommodate family commitments may also be particularly important for these women, including child care and day (or home) care for the elderly.

. . . For Learning Self-Confidence and Teamwork Through Sports

No matter what their preferences for balancing careers and family life, young women are likely to benefit from activities that will build their self-confidence and ability to act as part of a team. One of the most powerful legacies of Title IX is its extension of athletic and sports opportunities to women and girls. Though the outcomes are hard to measure, these opportunities have undoubtedly helped many women develop the confidence and judgment to make good decisions outside the realm of sports and to handle responsibilities effectively.

As with women's choices among educational options, trends in women's participation in sports and athletics demonstrate that women have responded positively to new options available to them as young people and that their choices are shaping their lives as they grow older.

At the high-school level, the increase in girls' participation in sports has been phenomenal. Between 1973 and 1987, the number of high-school girls participating in interscholastic sports more than doubled, from 817,000 to 1,836,000, according to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). This increase is especially remarkable because it occurred during a period when the number of boys participating in high-school sports dropped.

At the college level, women increased their participation in intercollegiate sports—increasing from 32,000 participants in 1972 to 92,000 in 1986, according to the NCAA. Because the development of women's intercollegiate teams relies on young athletes coming out of strong high-school programs, the number of college-level participants is expected to grow as high-school teams improve and grow in number. The number of female college participants will also grow as more young women receive athletic scholarships; unfortunately, neither the NCAA or any other organization collects data on these scholarships (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1984, as reported in Moran, 1986.)

The growth in women's opportunities to participate in school sports is reflected in their successful participation in amateur sports, including the Olympics. The number of U.S. women participating in the Olympic games, for example, increased almost three-fold between the 1964 and 1984 Olympics. In the 1984 games, U.S. women even outperformed U.S. men, with U.S. women winning 45 percent of all gold medals awarded to women and U.S. men winning 38 percent of all gold medals awarded to men (Lawrence, 1987).

Growth in the popularity of women's sports translates into more and more adult women participating in recreational sports and athletics. According to private surveys conducted for sporting goods dealers, women now make up the majority of new participants in physical conditioning, weight training, running, and fitness bicycling. With more and more women earning salaries that sizable discretionary spending, these trends mean that businesses catering to sports and athletics will target women as critical new consumers of their products and services (Women's Sports Foundation, 1987).

As with women's choices among educational options, trends in women's participation in sports and athletics demonstrate that women have responded enthusiastically to new options available to them as young people and that their choices are shaping their lives as they grow older. In the case of sports, these choices also strengthen their self-confidence and their ability to work as team members in jobs and civic affairs. Though impossible to measure, the development of these traits has improved the ability of many women to make informed, confident decisions in planning their futures and in their everyday lives.

. . . For Participating in Politics and Governance

An important area in which many women are making decisions and exerting leadership is politics and governance at local, state, and national levels. Most fundamentally, women have significantly increased their power at the polls, according to the Bureau of the Census. More women than men voted in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections, a trend that had been predicted due to the greater number of voting-age women and the greater number of women registered to vote.

At a more visible level, voters are electing women to public office in growing numbers. The Bureau of the Census reports data collected by the Center for the American Woman and Politics at the Eagleton Institutes of Politics, Rutgers University, indicating that, between 1975 and 1986:

- The number of women elected to Congress doubled (from 12 to 25)
- The number of women elected to state legislatures increased by more than one-third (from 610 to 996)
- The number of women elected to county commissions tripled (from 456 to 1,508)
- The number of women elected mayor tripled (from 566 to 1,670)
- The number of women elected to city and town councils more than doubled (from 5,365 to 12,903)

More women than men voted in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections.

While women's contributions to decision-making in politics and governance have grown in the most visible area-election to public office-their contributions to the political process have also decreased in one important but much less visible role, that of the unpaid political organizer and worker.

Similarly, women serving on local school boards increased from 33 to 37 percent of all school-board members between 1981 and 1986 (Downey, 1987).

These trends continued in the 1987 off-year elections, prompting the chairwoman of the National Women's Political Caucus, Irene Natividad, to conclude that "to a large extent race and gender are not a barrier" to public office (*Washington Post*, November 5, 1987). Despite this evidence of electoral success, women still hold only a small minority of elective offices. According to the Center for the American Woman and Politics, women hold no more than 16 percent of the available elective positions at any level of public office. Rather than a lack of willingness to serve, this low aggregate level probably reflects the difficulty of breaking into established networks of fundraising and political dealmaking.

Indirect evidence reported by the Bureau of the Census indicates that fewer women are contributing their time as volunteers in political campaigns. Anecdotal reports of the Republican and Democratic national offices confirm that trend. This loss has meant that parties and candidates must hire more paid workers than before, further exacerbating the cost of running for public office. Thus, while women's contributions to decisionmaking in politics and governance have grown in the most visible area--election to public office--their contributions to the political process have also decreased in one important but much less visible role, that of the unpaid political organizer and worker.

A Report Card on Women's Educational Equity--Where Do We Stand?

Title IX and the other political efforts of the 1970s resulted in a remarkable expansion of the options available to American women. Indeed, the changes of the 1970s launched a trend that has picked up steam over time. As women have obtained better, more extensive educational options, they have chosen to take advantage of them, so that women now outnumber men in all types of educational settings except doctoral and professional programs.

Women are looking for options that the women's political movement of the 1960s and 1970s may not have fully envisioned.

Not surprisingly, many women who have exercised their educational options and completed their schooling have moved into demanding careers. Indeed, as new employment opportunities open up for women in any area, as occurred in the 1970s with military careers, women from a broad variety of educational backgrounds have responded.

Some women, however, are weighing the costs of lifestyles centered on demanding careers, and they are choosing to give higher priority to their families and other commitments. As a result, these women are looking for job-related options, such as employer-supported day care, flexible scheduling, and job-sharing. These women are, in effect, looking for options that the women's political movement of the 1960s and 1970s may not have fully envisioned.

The choices that women make among the options available to them are only part of the story. The requirements of women's equity also involve the ability to handle decisions and take responsibility. Although it is easier to see diversity than to pick out trends in this arena, this report has identified a few clear themes. First, many women face decisions about whether and how they will take a role in enlarging the opportunities available to other women. Because the costs can be significant, women who decide to take these steps often confront risks and sacrifices. They may also, however, experience the satisfaction of knowing they have promoted lasting benefits for others. Second, women face decisions about how to balance the needs of their families against the career of job commitments. Third, many women today have found that they can strengthen their capacity for responsible decisionmaking by learning confidence and teamwork through sports, an option that Title IX has greatly enhanced. Fourth, growing numbers of women are proving their ability to exert responsible decisionmaking through their involvement in politics and governance.

Growing numbers of women are proving their ability to exert responsible decisionmaking through their involvement in politics and governance.

This summary only points to successes in efforts to achieve educational equity for women, but, as this report indicates, the successes do not tell the whole story. Because of their personal circumstances, many women must work much harder and overcome more obstacles in order to make the choices and decisions that are more freely accessible to more privileged women. Notable examples include young women who drop out of school, especially when they are driven out by the demands of teenage pregnancy and motherhood. This group can clearly benefit from earlier, better attention from their families, their schools, and community and religious organizations.

Because of their personal circumstances, many women must work much harder and overcome more obstacles in order to make the choices and decisions that are more freely accessible to more privileged women.

In addition to the problems of specific groups of women, several inequitable conditions cut across the educational experiences of all women, impeding the achievement of equity. One such problem is the failure of many schools to address the specific learning needs of girls and women, especially in mathematics and science. To deal with this problem, training programs for teachers need to do a better job of sensitizing prospective teachers to (1) the different learning styles that students exhibit in mathematics and science and (2) the teaching methods that best address their learning needs. Girls and women, like their brothers, also suffer from the failure of some schools to provide them with the historical and ethical understanding needed in making the decisions that life will demand.

A second cross-cutting educational problem is the disparity in student financial aid available to women and men. Although differences in the grants and loans provided to women and men do not by themselves indicate inequity, they are consistent with the finding that women terminate their formal education sooner than men before completing doctoral or professional programs. If this occurs because of the inequitable availability of financial aid, then these practices are unfairly limiting the options available to women.

A third problem is the slowness of the educational system to hire and promote women in administrative positions. Although many teachers choose to remain in teaching positions for personal reasons, there are undoubtedly many able women who are qualified to serve in senior administrative roles but are denied those jobs due to institutional customs and biases. The educational system should address this problem and thereby provide more varied role models for students, while advancing broader goals of equity for women.

A final problem is the failure of the educational establishment, including ED and other organizations such as the NCAA, to collect and report frequent data regularly on the educational experiences of women and men. Though it is the most recent available, much of the information used in preparing this report was not recent (e.g., the differing high-school programs of girls and boys). Other needed information proved to be nonexistent (e.g., the numbers of athletic scholarships awarded to women and men). To address this problem, future plans to collect data on students and staff should include questions on gender, in order to permit groups such as the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs to monitor progress towards educational equity. In this regard, the educational establishment should follow the lead of the U.S. Department of Defense, which collects and reports data on gender in virtually all its human-resources activities.

Future plans to collect data on students and staff should include questions on gender.

As this report indicates, women's educational equity is still very much an issue, despite being overlooked in current efforts to improve the quality of educational services. Although important progress has been achieved since the 1970s, serious challenges remain. As decisions are made to address these challenges, the Council urges that its conception of equity be used to guide discussion and subsequent action:

> Equity is the ability and opportunity to have options, make choices, handle decisions and take responsibility.

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